

Supernatural Beings

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Hi, my name is Bryan Lawrence (he/him) and today I am going to discuss the use of Supernatural Beings in First Century Judaism and in the Gospel of Matthew. There are several different types of Supernatural Beings that are seen throughout the Gospel and each slide will examine their use and importance.

First off, God and divine glory fall into a similar category. God is the “creator and ruler of the universe who has made a covenant with the people of Israel” (Lesses, 683). In the Tanakh, God is referred to as male and female imagery is rarely used to describe him. God is an important figure because he gives rewards and punishments to individuals.

Furthermore, God is constantly appearing to individuals in special ways and we can see this when God shows himself to Abraham in a vision in Genesis 15 as well as the people of Israel at Mt. Sinai in Exodus 19-20.

Moving on, divine wisdom is unique because it is only presented in female forms. Wisdom shares God’s creative powers and has guided human decision making since the start.

Wisdom will not act independently of God and this can be seen in Proverbs 8.30, “then I was beside him, like a master worker; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always.”

Next, Angels are seen throughout the Tanakh and then in the New Testament as well.

Angels serve many different roles such as bringing messages from God to humans, saving the righteous from evil, interpret visions from God, and possess divine authority. Angels play an important role in passing on divine messages. We can see this in In Revelation 1.1, when John of Patmos receives the ‘revelation of Jesus Christ’ which was sent to him by an angel. (Lesses, 684)

The Son of Man is an interesting supernatural being because it is Jesus’s self designation. The term is first used by Daniel when he describes a vision that God gives power on Earth to “one like a man”. This eventually turns into “Son of Man” and Jesus continues to use it ‘cryptically’ to refer to himself as the heavenly judge/advocate. We can see the Son of Man when Jesus states “but so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to

forgive sins.” (Lesses, 686) The Son of Man has existed before creation and has played an important role.

Last but not least, Satan is a significant figure that we should know. The figure of Satan was mostly developed throughout the Tanakh, where he is a member of the divine council, into the enemy of God and all of humanity. Later Second Temple period texts present different evil figures, such as the fallen angels and Mastema, who go further in opposing divine will. Jesus fights Satan’s power by casting out demons who afflict people with insanity and sadness. These are known as exorcisms and there are examples found in Matthew. In the New Testament, we see that those who become Satan’s prey are condemned to Hades (also known as the underworld). Thank you

- Lesses, Rebecca. “Supernatural Beings.” Pages 682-688 in *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, Amy-Jill Levine and Mark Zvi Brettler, editors. Second Edition. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018.